

## Arson Hinted In Church Fires

BERKELEY—Fires broke out in two churches less than a block apart last night. Firemen are looking for a possible arsonist. Damage was estimated at \$3,100.

The first blaze was discovered shortly after 6 p.m. in the First Congregational Church, 2345 Channing Way; the second was reported at 8:34 p.m. from the First Presbyterian Church, 2407 Dana St.

John Colburn, 34, of 701 Sutter St., San Francisco, entered the Congregational Church chapel for private meditations and found the room filled with smoke.

The fire, centered at the altar, destroyed tapestries, candelabra and other articles valued at \$3,000.

Women meeting in the social hall annex of the Presbyterian Church complained of smelling smoke and Roger Armstrong of 60 Terrace Road, Walnut Creek, went to the basement to investigate.

He found several boxes of clothes destined for overseas missionary posts smouldering. Damage was limited to about \$100.

# \$500,000

## Fire Loss

APR 29 1967

## To Church

BERKELEY — A stubborn fire of undetermined origin flared through the First Congregational Church here last night, causing estimated damage of at least \$500,000.

Fifty men and 11 fire trucks battled for nearly three hours to control the two-alarm blaze.

One fireman was treated for smoke inhalation.

According to Deputy Fire Chief A. J. Hanson the blaze started in the basement and spread through the walls and pillars to the attic and roof.

Smoke and water damage was "very extensive," he said.

The smoke and fire attracted crowds of spectators, most of them University of California students living in residence halls across the street from the landmark church at 2345 Channing Way.

Smoke billowing from the New England style brick building was so thick that firemen wore oxygen masks and the main entrance of the church was obscured from the street.

Fireman Stanley Sprague, 39, of 560 Colusa Ave., was overcome by smoke on top of an aerial ladder. He was brought down on a litter attached to another ladder and was treated at Herrick Memorial Hospital.

The fire was first reported at 9:36 p.m. At 10:15 p.m. Fire Chief G. Rodney Porter ordered a second alarm and called additional men and equipment to the church.

Although the blaze was reported under control "for all practical purposes" at midnight it was some time before firemen were able to extinguish a troublesome hot spot

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Campbell, Conrad, Hayes, Democrats absent (7): Davis, Dedden, Fenton, MacDonald, Morelli, Thomas, Zenovich.

## Smoke Pall

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on the roof near the bell tower.

Finally, an aerial ladder truck was driven across the sidewalk and front lawn to a point where water could be poured on to the roof.

Two automobiles, including the fire chief's car, had to be pushed out of the way to make way for an observation platform truck.

Fire Capt. William Krueger said the pillars supporting the ceiling in the main sanctuary acted like flues, carrying flame from the basement into the attic and roof.

He explained the pillars are steel girders encased in hollow wood and plaster shells.

The Rev. Mr. Barr, who was called from a dinner engagement at San Jose when the fire broke out, said church services and Sunday school classes would not be held in the complex Sunday.

He said that although all but the main building suffered only smoke and water damage, the utilities would not be restored by tomorrow.

One worship service for the congregation will be held at 10:10 a.m. tomorrow in the Presbyterian Church across the street, he said.

Capt. Krueger reported the church's big organ appeared to have survived without much damage. Although the stained glass windows were not blown out, they may have been cracked by the intense heat.

Officials said they could give no immediate indication of what caused the blaze.

Fire inspectors returned to the smoldering church today to search for its origin.

Two years ago an arsonist ignited a fire in the main chapel which caused \$3,000 damage.